

What's in Season from the Garden State

Biweekly Highlights from Cooperative Extension, a unit of Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

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A follow-up survey was administered to the parents/caregivers of families who used *From Our Farms* to assess the impacts the curriculum has on nutrition and agriculture knowledge. According to the evaluation, participation in the program resulted in a number of behavior changes:

- 75% reported that their child tried a new fruit or vegetable
- 34% prepared/cooked locally grown foods with their children
- 75% learned how fruits/vegetables grow
- 83% learned which fruits/vegetables grow in New Jersey
- 67% planted a garden or fruit/vegetable plants
- 97% visited a farm stand or farm market
- 99% purchased "Jersey Fresh" produce

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If you ask a child where our food comes from, what would they answer?

*Luanne J. Hughes, Family & Community Health Sciences Educator,
Rutgers Extension of Gloucester County*

Most consumers today are unaware that what they choose to eat affects the environment because their modern lives have little or no connection to the growing of food. By "reconnecting" consumers to the food system, we promote ecological diversity and protect natural resources. In addition, helping people understand where their food comes from is one way to help them explore food options and incorporate fresh foods into their diet, and can be an appealing way to interest children in nutrition. These concepts are the foundation for *From Our Farms*[™], a nutrition and agriculture education curriculum developed by Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) and offered through local libraries, childcare facilities and elementary schools.

From Our Farms was created in response to a call by consumers, farmers/growers and targeted collaborators for a program that teaches families about locally grown food products – how food grows and why it is "good for you." The premise is that families – if presented with information on agriculture, food and nutrition in an interesting and entertaining way – will build new eating skills and select more locally produced foods.

From Our Farms is an interactive, activity-based curriculum for children ages 3 to 8. The curriculum promotes improved nutrition and consumption of locally grown foods through a series of activities offered through libraries, childcare centers and schools. Learning Boxes combine *From Our Farms* learning modules called Family Fun pages and activity sheets with coordinating instructional materials (storybooks, puzzles, games, crafts, videos, audiotapes, etc.). Adults use the boxes with children at home, in the library or in the classroom, where families read stories and play games that teach about food, nutrition and agriculture. Activity days, offered by RCE, supplement the learning boxes and include teacher or librarian in-services, family cooking classes, group farmstand outings, story time programs, etc.

To date, more than 5,500 children have participated in *From Our Farms* activities. With the launch of school wellness policies throughout New Jersey, *From Our Farms* allows RCE nutrition educators to offer schools an appealing, easy-to-implement and effective nutrition curriculum to help meet wellness policy guidelines. Additionally, since *From Our Farms* activities incorporate math, reading, writing and cognitive development into learning, the curriculum is ideally suited to support school wellness initiatives. To order a copy of the curriculum or for more information on *From Our Farms* visit our web site at <http://gloucester.rcre.rutgers.edu/fchs/fromourfarms.html>.

Continued on page 2

**New Jersey Department of
Agriculture's Jersey Fresh &
Seafood Availability Report**

Current:
Squash - yellow and
Arugula zucchini
Baby Arugula & Sweet Corn
Baby Spinach Swiss Chard
Basil Tomatoes
Beets Turnips

Blueberries
Cabbage
Cilantro
Collards
Cucumbers
Dandelions
Dill
Eggplant
Kale
Leeks &
Green Onions
Mint
Parsley
Peppers
Radishes

Forecast:
Canataloupes - mid-July
Nectarines - mid- July
Peaches - after 4th of
July
White Potatoes - 2
weeks



Black Sea Bass
Bluefish
Butterfish
Daylights
Flounder
Fluke
Ling
Lobster
Mackerel
Monktail (Day
Boat)
Scup (Porgies)
Sea Scallops
(Day Boat)
Squid
Swordfish
Weakfish
Whiting



Where to find Jersey Fresh? Ask for it
where you shop or dine or go to:
<http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov>

To receive these reports by e-mail:
njfarmfresh@rce.rutgers.edu

Web: <http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu>
For your county Rutgers Cooperative
Extension office go to:
<http://www.rce.rutgers.edu/county>

Youth Farmstands: The Next Generation of Entrepreneurs

Lydia Blalock, Extension Specialist in Youth Development

The RCE Youth Farmstands are open for business in Atlantic, Gloucester, Mercer and Warren Counties! The Youth Farmstand Program helps to increase workforce readiness skills in at-risk youth, support local farmers and the NJ agriculture industry, and build healthier, stronger communities.

Youth farmstands provide hands-on work and management experiences to participants in grades 9-12. Youth are involved in all aspects of running and managing the farmstands, from customer service to ordering, pricing, and even market research. The youth are able to provide customers with nutrition information, cooking methods and even recipes. Our youth do it all!



The youth farmstands are located in economically depressed communities to provide local residents with easy access to fresh, quality produce. Several accept WIC and Senior Nutrition program vouchers, increasing voucher redemption rates in those communities. The Youth farmstands support the NJ Department of Agriculture's *Jersey Fresh* program and only locally grown produce is purchased for resale. *Jersey Fresh* logos are prominently displayed at all stands, and youth educate customers about the benefits of buying local to the community as well as local farmers. Unsold produce is donated to local organizations serving economically vulnerable populations.



Please support our efforts by visiting your nearest youth farmstand! The 2007 schedule and locations are available at: <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/youthfarmstand/countyinfo.htm>. If you are interested in bringing the Youth Farmstand Program to your community, please contact Lydia B. Blalock at 732-932-9705 or blalock@rce.rutgers.edu.

Finding Jersey Seafood is a Shore Bet

It's easy enough to find *Jersey Fresh* produce – many supermarkets, farmers markets and restaurants sport the *Jersey Fresh* signs, but how do you find *Jersey Seafood*? Aside from the many tasty seafood eateries along the Jersey Shore, previously there was no way to tell if local seafood markets, supermarkets or restaurants were providing Jersey Seafood, unless you asked.

That is changing as the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's *Jersey Seafood* promotional program gets underway. The *Jersey Seafood* signs will be distributed by seafood producers to the stores they sell to. Look for the Jersey Seafood sign – and if you don't see it – ask! Consumers should start seeing the logo in more stores. According to Joseph Myers, Aquaculture Development Specialist at NJDA, you should start finding Jersey Seafood at these supermarkets: Pathmark, ShopRite, Whole Foods, A&P and Foodtown. Wegmans has been carrying Jersey Seafood for a number of years.

What about restaurants? The New Jersey Department of Agriculture and the New Jersey Restaurant Association jointly distribute plaques to NJ restaurants that proclaim, "This Restaurant is Proud to Serve New Jersey Produced & Harvested Products When in Season." Restaurants displaying this sign may be serving both Jersey Fresh produce and/or Jersey Seafood. Look for the sign. A list of New Jersey restaurants that carry the sign is available at: <http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov/>. A sampling of what's on the menu at some of these restaurants is available at: <http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu/servingjerseyfresh.asp>.